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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Domestic violence conference sparks discussion, advocacy for historic *Violence Against Family Act*

*Theme: Strengthening Our Community, because Violence is Not Our Tradition*

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — Joining forces together to put a stop to domestic violence, Navajo Nation social services and law enforcement officials held a conference April 27 and 28 shedding light on the multi-faceted issues family violence has on victims.

"I'm enthusiastic about the conference theme, 'Strengthening Our Community,' and the sub-theme, 'Violence is Not Our Tradition,' because I truly believe the more we talk about the issues domestic violence has on our families, and our society, the more we can make a big difference for the world our children live in," Councilman Joshua Lavar Butler (To'Nanees'Dizi) said at the conference.

About 150 participants were registered for the event. Butler chose this venue to announce his advocacy and intent to sponsor an historic Navajo "Violence Against Family Act," which will soon be drawing consideration by a Council committee.

"This bill will impose consequences upon the people who violate the Navajo values of K'é and Hozhó," Butler said. "It will empower the Navajo criminal justice system to respond to domestic violence, which is contrary to the traditional Navajo Way of Life, and is a clear violation of fundamental human rights."

The bill arms police officers with the power to make mandatory arrests on people who have probable cause of committing family violence. It also holds minimum penalties for stalking, harassment, sexual assault and false imprisonment — all committed by family members.

Butler said this act has been in the works for nearly 14 years by members of the Navajo Nation Advisory Council Against Domestic Violence, and only in the last three years, has this legislation started making headway toward becoming law.

He also praised the Tohdenasshai Shelter home in Kayenta, and the anticipated opening of a new women's shelter, doubling the size of the existing shelter.

"This shelter provides hope and a chance at a new beginning for women victimized by domestic violence," Butler said. "I will strongly advocate for a shelter of hope to be built for my constituents in the Tuba City community as well."

Other workshops and themes at the conference talked about grant-writing for social services, the judicial process in prosecuting domestic violence and ways to intervene with suicidal and traumatized people, amongst the classes and programs at the conference.

The event comes at the end of April's Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

“We need to restore traditional values back into our way of life,” Butler said. “As a member of the Health, Education and Human Services Committee of the Navajo Nation Council, I am a strong and outspoken advocate for seeing these values restored.”

Butler thanks the event organizers, they include: Beya Thayer; Lynette Goldtooth with Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation; Angie Maloney; Angie Chee; Patricia Collins; Tina Hatathlie; Nelda Dugi-Huskie; Hope MacDonald-Lone Tree; Ella Cook; Gwendolyn Williams; Grace Marks; Tana Yazzie; Cherelynn Manson; Glorianna Woodie; Vernon Davis; Lyndon Endishee; Charlene Ben and Linda Petri.

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